



County of Los Angeles

Department Of Children And Family Services

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020

DAVID SANDERS, PH.D.
Director

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June 24, 2003

To: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair
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From: David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF PLACEMENT DISRUPTIONS

It has been my concern during my short time here that our Department has not taken sufficient steps to assure placement stability for children in our care. I know from our initial discussions that you share this concern. I believe the issue of children staying at the Command Post is a symptom of this problem and as a result I am implementing a plan to begin to craft a long-term solution to this issue. The first step in developing this solution is to better understand the population of children at risk for placement disruption. Historically, our Department has waited for a crisis, then worked fervently to resolve the crisis. With this plan, I intend for the Department to use information to better anticipate crises and assure measures are in place to assure placement stability for children at highest risk for premature discharge

First, we will identify all the children that we believe are potentially at risk of a placement disruption. Next, we will analyze their general needs and determine whether we are appropriately allocating our placement resources. We will then review the individual case plans for these children and confirm that necessary placement stabilizing services have been added. Following is a brief outline of these steps.

For our first step, our research staff will gather and organize data on our population of at risk children. This will provide us basic information, such as, the number of at risk children, their level of permanence (e.g., adoption, guardianship, long-term foster care) and age category (e.g., pre-teen, teen, young adult), placement history (e.g.,

runaway episodes, multiple group home stays, and other placement disruptions). Our experience indicates that these children will have some of the following characteristics:

- Past stays at MacLaren Children's Center;
- A history of multiple placements;
- Group home placements at an early age;
- A dual diagnosis with developmental delays;
- A history of running away;
- Initial detention as an adolescent with behavior problems; and/or,
- Over the age of 18 without a permanent plan (e.g., those with developmental delays that do not meet Regional Center criteria for adult services, those having mental illness, gang affiliations or that are whereabouts unknown).

Once we have this basic information describing our at risk population, we will analyze their needs to determine whether our services are sufficient to ensure stability in all placements. We hope to find out where our resources would best be allocated, including whether the implementation of certain programs should be adjusted and if there are gaps in our services.

Once we have analyzed the general needs of this population, I will ask our regional managers to review the children's individual case plans. I want to ensure that every child that is at risk of a placement disruption has specific components in his/her case plan designed to minimize that risk. Because we do not yet know the size of this population, the time and resources necessary to complete this review cannot yet be determined.

I will provide your Board with an update within 30 days. Please contact me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Helen Berberian at (213) 351-5530. Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

DS:MF:am

- c. Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel